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Friday, 12 July 1996, 10.45 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Dejammet	(France)
Members:	Botswana	Mr. Motswagae
	Chile	Mr. Somavía
	China	Mr. Wang Xuexian
	Egypt	Mr. Abdel Aziz
	Germany	Mr. Henze
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Queta
	Honduras	Mr. Martínez Blanco
	Indonesia	Mr. Wibisono
	Italy	Mr. Ferrarin
	Poland	Mr. Włosowicz
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Park
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Weston
	United States of America	Mr. Inderfurth

Agenda

The situation in Georgia

Report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia (S/1996/507 and Add.1)

96-85930 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Georgia

Report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia (S/1996/507 and Add.1)

The President (*interpretation from French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Georgia and Ireland, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Chkheidze (Georgia) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Campbell (Ireland) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*interpretation from French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, documents S/1996/507 and Add.1. Members of the Council also have before them document S/1996/544, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to the following documents: S/1996/371, letter dated 23 May 1996 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General; and S/1996/527, letter dated 8 July 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, transmitting a letter dated 6 July 1996 from the President of Georgia addressed to the President of the Security Council.

The first speaker is the representative of Georgia, and I now call on him.

Mr. Chkheidze (Georgia) (*interpretation from Russian*): I am gratified, Sir, to have the opportunity once again to express to you our profound respect and to greet you in your capacity as President of the Security Council.

Allow me, on behalf of my Government, to express deep gratitude to the United Nations to the Security Council and to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and his representatives for their assistance to Georgia in its time of hardship.

We should like to extend our sincere gratitude to the group of countries known as "Friends of Georgia" for their attention and their tireless efforts aimed at a comprehensive solution to the conflict. We also wish to express our gratitude to Russia, as facilitator, for its untiring peace-keeping efforts.

Our country has consistently been aware of the support of the international community. Today, hundreds of thousands of persecuted people see their prospects for salvation as based on approaches elaborated by the international community. Their hopes for the future are linked to this. This faith is today a vital force for Georgia. It is thanks to this faith that we can survive all the festering wounds that the Abkhaz war has inflicted on many families on both sides of the Inguri River.

Today, the origin and development of the confrontation is no longer a secret. Also well-known are how the conflict arose, fed by slogans of defence of the communist empire; what the sources of weapons were; and the mandate for impunity for aggressive separatism.

The development of democratic processes condemned to failure the policy of force, which was fighting to continue the conflict in Abkhazia and in other regions of the former Soviet empire. Antagonism arose between progressively developing democracy and remaining revanchists, who stood on the sidelines; this revanchism set its roots in such hotbeds as Abkhazia.

The development of the tragic events in that region significantly promoted the process of the spread of large quantities of weapons and drugs, as well as the formation

of illegal armed bands, which later became bandit units. Abkhazia was transformed into a powerful force for destabilization in the Caucasus, and, despite the efforts of the international community, this negative trend continues to intensify.

This conflict continues to impede the development of sound political processes and is an insurmountable barrier to economic and social progress. The Secretary-General's latest report rightly takes note of the fact that the peace process is at a standstill. The Gali region, on which international efforts are currently focused, is engulfed by lawlessness and chaos. Today the process of political settlement has been essentially undermined. Negotiations have broken off and the rare meetings merely create the illusion that they are continuing. The small number of refugees who have returned to their homes have become hostages in the hands of bandit groups, and their lives and dignity are humiliated.

The implementation of a policy of genocide and "ethnic cleansing" towards Georgians in Abkhazia was broadly recognized for the first time at the Budapest Summit of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (S/1994/1435). The Parliament of Georgia is considering a wealth of information received by the Prosecutor's office that bears witness to crimes against humanity. The policy of violence has forced three quarters of the Abkhazian population to leave their homes. The physical and moral condition of these displaced persons, who have been forced to remain without shelter, is desperate, and their death rate has significantly increased.

These ethnically-motivated murders, abductions and torture are compounded by a deterioration of the general situation of crime throughout the territory of Abkhazia. The targets of violence are no longer selected based on ethnic criteria: Abkhazia has been transformed into a sanctuary for local and foreign criminals.

In this situation, it seems cynical at the very least for the separatists to assert that the obstacle to the return of refugees is the will of the remaining local population and that "some time" is required to change this. This issue is addressed in paragraph 7 of the Secretary-General's report. This is nothing but an attempt to create the impression that genocide and the forcible takeover of territories as a result of the allegedly provoked conflict should be taken for granted and that the majority remaining in the territory is concerned

> "to heal [the] wounds and to change [the] outlooks" (*S/1996/507, para. 7*)

of the minority inhabitants.

It is becoming clear that the breakdown in the process of negotiating the return of refugees is linked to the desire to legitimize lawlessness and play for time. The houses of refugees who have been persecuted are occupied by criminals as rewards for their crimes. At the same time, a carefully planned and well organized programme is being carried out to limit the international presence in the region.

Things have reached the point where the lives not only of the defenceless and humiliated Georgian population deprived of its rights, but also of United Nations military observers, are being threatened, not to mention their inability to carry out their mandated tasks.

This calculation has turned out to be impeccable. The mining of a great number of areas in the region has provided to those interested in doing so the opportunity to harass the international presence in areas they have selected for terrorism. The population, in a state of constant terror, has in fact lost all hope for or faith in justice. The mining of the territory also has far-ranging consequences, allowing those who are carrying it out to create conditions in which international observers are deprived of first-hand information and in which the thwarting of the international community is planned and premeditated.

We must assume that if, in the future, the opportunity to receive objective information from the area is not reestablished, the number of reports about the Abkhaz militia's carrying out operations to quell resistance, such as those noted in paragraph 32 of the report, or about the banditry and carousal of criminal groups in areas not controlled by the Abkhaz militia, as described in paragraph 26, will continue to grow.

It is not surprising that such a description of the situation leaves us unhappy. Meanwhile, individuals who are well known to everyone are officially incorporated into the law enforcement organs of Abkhazia and have received numerous military decorations for valour, while being officially acknowledged as executioners and torturers of many innocent civilians included in the long list of victims.

It is perfectly obvious that a peaceful settlement and mutual compromise can be attained only on the basis of the good will of both parties to the conflict, as noted in paragraph 56 of the report. But was not this commitment spelled out in Georgia's proposals on the status of Abkhazia in document S/1996/165?

The guarantee of the implementation of these proposals lies in the policy of the Government of Georgia and the firm position of President Eduard Shevardnadze, who has repeatedly reiterated it. His efforts constitute a deterrent to the supporters of chaotic and radical actions. When we speak of the prospects for achieving peace in the region, we must take into account the historic traditions of our peoples who, despite various political developments, have never changed. Only its age-old coexistence with Georgians has enabled the small Abkhaz nation to retain its identity, culture, language and opportunities for development.

The difficult but ultimately inevitable process of Georgia's revival is ineluctably linked to the future of Abkhazia. It is precisely in this connection that the President of Georgia has come up with the idea of creating a special fund to carry out the process of economic reconstruction of the region's infrastructure once the political negotiations are successfully concluded. The Government of Georgia expresses its great hope that this idea will receive broad international support and believes it to be an important incentive for the evolution of the peace process.

Georgia's Government is well aware that both sides bear responsibility for maintaining peace and stability. It is clear, on the other hand, that a true assessment of the parties' positions as reflected in their actions cannot be achieved on the basis of a balanced approach.

In these circumstances, in which the resolutions of the Security Council are ignored and the efforts of international organizations and individual States come to naught, events threaten to take a tragic turn, and the international community's determination will be able to triumph only through enforcement.

My Government cherishes the hope that all possible steps will be taken to expand the participation of the international community in a settlement of the conflict. In our view, it would be useful to send representatives of the Security Council to Georgia to study the situation on the ground. We also express the hope that the Security Council will make use of all means available to it to convince the separatists of the hopelessness of their destructive policy. We also wish to express our certainty that the appropriate international support for a settlement will also be given through the peace-keeping activities of the regional organizations of the CIS.

We believe that higher demands and expanded action are necessary to prevent further escalation of tension and bloodshed.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I thank the representative of Georgia for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Ireland. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Campbell (Ireland): I am grateful for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following associated countries align themselves with this statement: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia. Iceland and Norway have also aligned themselves with this statement.

This will be the third occasion in the space of six months that the Security Council is considering the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia. It is also, I regret to say, yet another occasion on which we have to note the continued failure of the parties to achieve a comprehensive political settlement. The economic and political consequences of this failure are serious; but it is the human dimension of this stalemate which is a source of particular concern to the European Union.

The scale of this human tragedy is eloquently described in the letter of 6 July 1996 to the President of the Security Council from the President of Georgia. The European Union wishes to express its condemnation of the ethnically motivated killings that have occurred in the region and other related acts of violence. The international community cannot tolerate such barbaric violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms and urges that all steps be taken to arrest the perpetrators of such acts and bring them to justice.

We deeply deplore the obstacles which the Abkhaz authorities have mounted by preventing the early return of refugees and displaced persons. We call on them to take immediate steps, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

(UNHCR), to enable all displaced persons and refugees to return freely to their homes under secure conditions and without any linkage to the question of the political status of Abkhazia, Georgia.

The European Union welcomes the programme for the protection and promotion of human rights which will be carried out by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and we look forward to the establishment of an office in Sukhumi. We call on the parties to lend their full cooperation to this important initiative.

The comprehensive report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, shows very clearly that despite the very considerable efforts of the United Nations and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), insufficient progress has been made in arriving at a mutually acceptable solution to the conflict.

The European Union is especially disappointed that in spite of the very positive gestures which the Government of the Republic of Georgia has made in putting forward a framework for political compromise, no serious response from the other side has been made which would allow meaningful negotiations to take place.

This attitude on the part of the Abkhaz authorities ignores two fundamental principles to which the European Union remains totally committed: first, full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders; and second, our refusal to allow the valuable work of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) and the Commonwealth of Independent States to be undermined by those determined to pursue their own goals without regard for the well-being of their own peoples.

The European Union wishes to express its full support for the efforts which the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, Ambassador Brunner, and his resident Deputy, Mr. Bota, have made to encourage the parties to move towards a political settlement which is both comprehensive and balanced.

We also support the work which the Russian Federation, in its capacity as facilitator, has undertaken to intensify the search for a peaceful settlement to this conflict. We should like to pay tribute to the OSCE, and we welcome the reference that has been made in the draft resolution before the Council today to their collective efforts in a search for a negotiated agreement.

The laying of mines in the Gali region and the deaths which have been caused by them are utterly to be condemned. The consequent severe limitation on the capacity of UNOMIG to move freely in the area, together with the closure of the three team bases that have resulted, are totally unacceptable. The European Union urges the parties to take all necessary measures to prevent the laying of mines. In this regard, we welcome the steps which the Secretary-General has so far taken to arrange for the provision of mine-protected vehicles and some engineering support.

The safety and freedom of movement of the peace-keeping personnel of UNOMIG and the CIS remain of paramount importance, and the fullest cooperation must be provided by all parties to allow them to carry out their mandate in a proper, safe and effective manner.

The European Union looks forward to the resumption of negotiations between the Abkhaz authorities and the Government of Georgia. As the President of Georgia writes in his letter to you, Sir, we must not abandon the course of negotiations. It is only through such negotiations that a lasting solution can be brought to this conflict which has already caused too much human suffering. Only a comprehensive political settlement can guarantee the security of all and lay the foundations for economic and social development in the region.

The European Union would welcome the adoption of this draft resolution today. It is a clear demonstration of the concern of the international community at the continuing stalemate in resolving this question and constitutes an urgent appeal to the parties for every effort to be made to resume early and conclusive negotiations.

The President (*interpretation from French*): It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I shall first call on those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Henze (Germany): Let me begin by saying that Germany fully supports the statement made by the representative of Ireland on behalf of the European Union.

Comparing the situation in Georgia six months ago with the one we are facing now, we find that, as far as the unsolved issue of Abkhazia and the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) operations is concerned, the picture is not encouraging. This is the impression conveyed by the commendable and thorough report by the Secretary-General, for which we would like to thank him. The same point is also made, more strongly, in President Shevardnadze's letter of 6 July 1996 to the President of the Security Council, to which Germany attaches great importance.

It is evident that the contacts between the parties, assisted by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy and by the Russian Federation as facilitator, have so far had no tangible results. It is also worth noting that the Ambassadors of the group of "Friends of Georgia" carried out démarches in Tbilisi and Sukhumi on the basis of the presidential statement of 26 April 1996, and that the response the Ambassadors received in Sukhumi was unsatisfactory.

The reason for this impasse in the political process lies in the uncompromising attitude of the Abkhaz leadership, which insists on separate statehood for Abkhazia. As early as several months ago, the Georgian Government made a substantial, but so far unsuccessful, offer to the Abkhaz side, amounting to the creation of a federal State with far-reaching autonomy for Abkhazia. It is urgent now that the Abkhaz leadership learn to accept that any solution of the conflict must be based on the principles of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia.

Germany sees the rationale of UNOMIG and of the German contribution to it as support for an ongoing political process leading to a durable negotiated solution. We recognize and welcome the valuable and stabilizing role UNOMIG is playing, but this role cannot be to support a mere perpetuation of the political status quo without the prospect of a negotiated settlement. If the current political stalemate continues, the Council, in the future, might therefore be forced to ask itself where a future role for United Nations engagement in this conflict might lie.

Germany deeply deplores the effects of "ethnic cleansing" that the conflict in Abkhazia has brought with it, with the massive expulsion of people, predominantly Georgians, from their living areas, not to mention the deaths of a large number of innocent people. These effects are unacceptable. The Abkhaz side must therefore end without delay its obstruction of the return of refugees and displaced persons to the region. Any linkage of this question with the future status of Abkhazia is unacceptable.

Against this background, we are encouraged by indications both by the Secretary-General and by the Russian Federation as facilitator, of their intention to intensify their political and diplomatic efforts.

I would now like to stress a second major point. My Government continues to be very concerned by the deteriorated security situation which has brought patrolling by UNOMIG virtually to an end. We expect the parties to take forceful measures against the laying of mines, which is a danger not only to UNOMIG personnel and the CIS peacekeeping forces, but also, and most notably, to the local population, as well as to refugees and displaced persons returning to the region. This should include better surveillance of the cease-fire lines and prosecution of those responsible.

Germany welcomes the steps taken so far by the Secretary-General to cope with this threat. We trust that the Secretary-General will do everything in his power to minimize the risk for the United Nations personnel on the ground, and stress the need for continued and close cooperation and coordination between UNOMIG and the CIS peace-keeping forces in the fulfilment of their respective mandates. Here also, we tend to think that if no improvement is foreseen, there might be reason to take a fresh look at the tasks UNOMIG has been mandated to accomplish.

Let me end by commending the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, Ambassador Brunner, and his resident Deputy, Mr. Bota, for their diplomatic skill and tenacity. The personnel of UNOMIG deserve our full support and all our thanks for their efforts, made under extremely difficult conditions.

Mr. Somavía (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is not pleasant to have to begin an explanation of vote by expressing regret at such a long-standing lack of progress in the region. The Secretary-General's report, which we appreciate, tells us that the peace process between the Georgian and Abkhaz parties is at a standstill. Similar terms were used in previous reports.

We especially regret the fact that the leaders of Abkhazia do not want to understand that the Government and Parliament of Georgia are making a significant effort to seek a solution to the problem, having offered Abkhazia broad autonomy — a situation seldom seen in similar situations. Let us recall that in April the Georgian Parliament approved a resolution that recommended granting to Abkhazia a constitution, a parliament, executive and judicial bodies, an anthem, a flag, a coat of arms and other state attributes, in addition to exclusive areas of competence in economic, social, financial and tax spheres — all in the framework of a unitary federation within the internationally recognized borders of Georgia.

It is for this reason that the draft resolution which we are considering today, and to which we give our firmest support, notes with concern the uncompromising position adopted by the Abkhaz side, and urges the parties — particularly the Abkhaz — to make substantive progress in order to achieve an appropriate political solution.

Of course, the parties must resolve a key issue — the political status of Abkhazia. For this purpose they have available to them the good offices of the Secretary-General through his Special Envoy, the Russian Federation in its capacity as facilitator, and the support of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We are grateful to all of them for their endeavouring.

We would like to express particular support for the steps taken by the Russian Federation and the role that it is playing in the search for a solution to this conflict. It is in a special position, from which, we are convinced, it will be able to continue to serve the purpose of peace in Georgia. The leaders of Abkhazia must give serious consideration to the possibilities being afforded to the Abkhaz people to live in peace, without losing their national identity, to enjoy great internal jurisdiction, and to be able once and for all, together with all the other inhabitants of Georgia, to work for the development and well-being of the people.

My delegation wishes to thank the personnel of UNOMIG for the valuable role that they are playing in Georgia as we renew the UNOMIG mandate. We thank the Commonwealth of Independent States, the group of "Friends of Georgia", the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, the Red Cross and all the humanitarian organizations providing assistance in Georgia.

We wish to highlight in particular the work of those organizations that are dealing with the humanitarian situation. As in other conflicts under consideration by the Security Council, their actions are fundamental. For this reason it is important that we remember them and encourage them to continue in spite of present difficulties.

As we reiterate the support of the Chilean delegation for this draft resolution, we wish to point out that it gives due attention to the difficult humanitarian situation in Abkhazia. The draft resolution reaffirms the right of all refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes, condemns the ethnically motivated killings and the laying of mines, and supports the development of a programme for the protection and promotion of human rights.

We hope that the parties, and above all the Abkhaz leaders, will take meaningful steps on the basis of this draft resolution. That would be a clear signal to the international community. Let us bear in mind that within three months the Secretary-General will report to us on whether progress has been made in this respect, and at that time the Security Council will again have to turn its attention to the subject and decide what subsequent steps to take. Let us hope that at that time we will have better news.

Mr. Wang Xuexian (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Chinese delegation supports the draft resolution before us today. We hope that, upon adoption, it will play a positive role in the settlement of the question of Georgia.

The world is very much concerned about the long absence of a solution to the question of Georgia. The crux of a political settlement of the Georgian question is whether this newly independent Member State will continue to maintain its sovereignty and territorial integrity or will be dismembered. The position of the Security Council on this question is clear: the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia must be fully respected. A comprehensive political settlement of the Georgian question must proceed within this framework.

The Georgian Government, proceeding from the fundamental interests of the Georgian people, of all ethnic groups, has adopted a responsible attitude in promoting a comprehensive settlement of the Georgian question and has put forward constructive proposals, including that of establishing a federal State and granting Abkhazia wide-ranging autonomy. This position has provided a basis for an early settlement of the Georgian question, and we wish to express our appreciation and support for it.

Regrettably, however, the Abkhaz authorities still cling to a rigid position and continue to set obstacles to a political settlement, which has brought the peace process to a standstill. We cannot but express our deep concern over this situation.

No country can be prosperous, with its people living in peace, without ethnic harmony and territorial integrity. Therefore, we urge the parties concerned, particularly the Abkhaz authorities, to adopt a realistic approach and take concrete action to focus on settling the political status of Abkhazia so as to advance the peace process in Georgia and enable the Georgian people, of all ethnic groups, to live and work in peace and contentment at an early date.

The Secretary-General and his Special Envoy have made tremendous efforts for a comprehensive political settlement of the Georgian question, for which we wish to express our support and our thanks. We also believe that the countries concerned in the region, particularly the Russian Federation, can play a unique mediating role, and indeed have already been doing so. The Council should therefore encourage them to continue and increase their efforts to that end.

We have noted that the peace-keeping forces of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) and the Commonwealth of Independent States enjoy good cooperation and are together playing a positive role in stabilizing the situation in the region and promoting the peace process in Georgia. Therefore, we support the Secretary-General's recommendation to extend the mandate of UNOMIG.

Sir John Weston (United Kingdom): Just over two years ago, the Georgian Government and the Abkhaz leadership agreed to a cease-fire and appealed to the international community to help them to work for a political settlement. This Council responded by increasing, in both size and scope, the United Nations military observer presence on the ground in Georgia. It also made clear to the parties at that time that it expected them both to work urgently towards a comprehensive political settlement, and that such a settlement would have to respect fully the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

Since then, the Georgian Government has worked patiently and consistently towards that goal; the Abkhaz leadership has not. The Abkhaz leadership has failed to engage constructively in talks, in spite of Georgian proposals that would entail the widest possible autonomy for the Abkhaz region. It has blocked any significant return of non-Abkhaz refugees. And it has refused to face up to the fact that no country is prepared to contemplate an independent State of Abkhazia. In doing this, the Abkhaz leadership has condemned its own people to an impoverished and uncertain existence.

This Council will shortly extend the current mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) for a further six months. That decision represents the willingness of Council members to continue to commit scarce United Nations resources in the hope the current stalemate in negotiations can be overcome. It also represents the willingness of countries to make military personnel available. As a member of the Friends of the Secretary-General for Georgia, and as a leading contributor of personnel to UNOMIG, we are grateful to the Special Envoy, his Head of Mission and the Chief Military Observer, as well as to the members of UNOMIG, for their work. But UNOMIG must be able to count on the support of the parties, which requested United Nations involvement on the ground. The recent increase in the laying of mines in UNOMIG's area of responsibility is of particular concern, and we look to the parties to do all they can to ensure that such activities cease. We welcome the Secretariat's efforts to redeploy mine-protected vehicles and to provide UNOMIG with a mine detection and clearance capability, and we urge those concerned to work with the Secretariat so that such measures can be implemented as soon as possible. The objective is to work towards the restoration of UNOMIG's operational effectiveness. The presence of the peace-keeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is an important factor in achieving this, and we hope that UNOMIG and the CIS peace-keeping force will continue to develop closer cooperation to this end.

In addition, reconstruction and respect for human rights are key elements in developing stability and allowing the return of normality to the region. In particular, we welcome proposals to implement a programme for the protection and promotion of human rights, and look forward to the Secretary-General's report on arrangements to establish a human rights office in Sukhumi.

We believe that UNOMIG continues to have a valuable role in sustaining the conditions necessary to allow a lasting settlement to emerge. But — and we always say this on these occasions — it is up to the parties, and in particular the Abkhaz leadership, to

demonstrate that they are prepared to work earnestly and constructively towards a settlement. The British Government continues to believe that any such settlement, if it is to be viable, must fully respect Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): Like most of the other intra-State conflicts that have erupted in the wake of the cold war, the current situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, involves an interplay of political, humanitarian and military factors. We believe that the political process is the fundamental determining factor in this conflict and should thus be accorded the highest priority in the quest for a resolution.

In this context, we appreciate and support the efforts made by the Secretary-General, the group of "Friends of Georgia" and, in particular, the Russian Federation as facilitator to promote a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict.

We must agree with the Secretary-General, however, that the international community can only help the parties reach a solution if they are willing to resolve their differences in a spirit of compromise. In this regard, my delegation is of the view that the Georgian Government's proposal to grant Abkhazia far-reaching autonomy within the framework of a unified Georgian State, as outlined in President Shevardnadze's letter dated 6 July 1996, presents a solid foundation upon which to build a comprehensive political settlement.

We also join the other members of the Council in calling upon the Abkhaz side in particular to end the current standstill in the political process and to embrace a more pragmatic and flexible approach to reaching a solution based on the principle of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized boundaries.

Paralysis in the political process has also been accompanied by serious humanitarian conditions. Regrettably, the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes in Abkhazia continues to be obstructed by the Abkhaz side. A reduction is needed in the ongoing criminality and violence that are also deterring the return of refugees and displaced persons, especially in the Gali region. In this regard, we must emphasize that any attempt to tie the return of refugees to the question of Abkhazia's political status is wholly unacceptable.

On the other hand, we are pleased to support the programme for the protection and promotion of human rights in Abkhazia to be implemented by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We hope to receive the Secretary-General's detailed and timely report on arrangements for the establishment of a human rights office in Sukhumi so that the office can be opened as soon as possible.

On another important matter, land mines appear to pose the greatest obstacle, especially in the sense that they constrain the free movement of the personnel of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). In this vein, as a troop contributor to this peace-keeping operation, my delegation is especially pleased to note that UNOMIG personnel will be provided with both mine-protected vehicles and some engineering support for road-clearing. We also hope that the close and continued cooperation between UNOMIG and the Commonwealth of Independent States peace-keeping force will serve to enhance the safety of UNOMIG personnel.

In the light of all these considerations, my delegation will be pleased to support the Secretary-General's recommendation to extend the mandate of UNOMIG until 31 January 1997 by voting in favour of the draft resolution before us.

Finally, we would also like to express our sincere gratitude to Ambassador Brunner, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, and to Mr. Bota, his resident Deputy, as well as to all the personnel under their command for their determined efforts under trying conditions.

Mr. Wlosowicz (Poland): As pointed out in today's European Union statement, to which Poland adhered, this is the third time in the last six months that the Security Council has considered the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia. On the one hand, this shows that the process of resolving differences between the parties to the conflict is particularly difficult and is not bringing the expected results. On the other hand, the frequency of our debates on Georgia proves that there is a great deal of determination among members of the international community to assist that country in every possible way to find a solution to its tragic problems.

This question of the international community's determination — or, more generally speaking, its involvement — arises before this Council rather

frequently. And from our experience as members of the Security Council we know very well that there is a strict interdependence between the will of the parties to a conflict to settle their problems and the will of the international community to become engaged in the process of settlement.

Today, in the case of Georgia, we seem to be at a crossroads. The numerous efforts made by the international community have so far failed to solve the problems. Neither the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe nor the Commonwealth of Independent States has been able to succeed. The initiatives of the Ambassadors of the group of "Friends of Georgia" in Tbilisi have not significantly improved the situation either. Here one cannot question the will and commitment of the community of States. We can, however, question the will and commitment of those involved in the conflict.

In the draft resolution on which we are about to vote, the Security Council expresses its deep concern at the continued failure by the parties to resolve their differences owing to the uncompromising position taken by the Abkhaz side. It should be clearly stated that in situations like this there is no room for uncompromising positions. Instead, flexibility and moderation are required. We appeal to the parties to the conflict, and particularly to the Abkhazians, to demonstrate that their ultimate goal is a peaceful solution of their differences.

Our delegation is of the view that the only solution to the conflict is a comprehensive political settlement, including determination and acceptance of the political status of Abhkazia within the State of Georgia while respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the latter.

We are dismayed to hear that refugees and displaced persons are being barred by the Abkhaz side from returning home. Indeed, today's draft resolution stresses that there should be no linkage of the return of refugees and displaced persons with the question of the political status of Abkhazia. We expect that there will be a significant acceleration in the process of the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons without delay or preconditions, and that a timetable on the basis of that submitted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees will be observed. We must not let demographic changes happen as a result of the conflict.

The continuous threat posed by landmines is very distressing. Tragically, it is becoming a more and more common feature of today's conflicts. That is why we welcome with great appreciation the decision made by the Secretariat to provide the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) with engineering support and adequate demining equipment. At the same time, we condemn the laying of mines, notably in the Gali region. They have already caused several deaths among the civilian population, peace-keepers and international observers. This is unacceptable.

I have already spoken of the determination and commitment of the international community. But let us be realistic. In the light of the lack of cooperation and flexibility of those directly involved and in the light of the increasingly dangerous environment for discharging the peace-keeping mission, the interest of the members of the international community might be fading away.

By all means, we should prevent this. And because there is still a significant chance that the process of a peaceful solution to the conflict in Georgia will end in success, we are in favour of extending the mandate of UNOMIG until the end of January 1997.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Russian delegation is one of the sponsors of the draft resolution on the extension for six months of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). It is important in that it reaffirms the dedication of the international community to a political settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia on the basis of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and of ensuring the rights of the multinational people of that country.

We should like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, his Special Envoy and the Head of the Mission of UNOMIG for their efforts to promote a settlement to the conflict. We also pay tribute to the personnel of the Mission for their difficult but very necessary work.

Russia is vitally interested in seeing Georgia, which is friendly to us, as a stable, democratic and flourishing country. To this end, it is imperative that there be a speedy settlement of the conflict and the elimination of its consequences. As a facilitator of the negotiating process under the aegis of the United Nations, Russia is carrying out intensive work with the Government of Georgia and with the Abkhaz side aimed at moving forward the peace process, first and foremost with respect to the fundamental principles for future comprehensive agreements.

We are holding active consultations with the Abkhaz leaders, combined with measures to exert strong pressure on the Abkhaz side, in accordance with the decisions of the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) of 19 January 1996, in order to give greater flexibility and a constructive nature to the position of Sukhumi.

Another round of contacts with the Abkhaz side is currently taking place in Moscow. We are also working closely with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Georgia, Ambassador Edouard Brunner. He is awaited in Moscow next week for important consultations. We are counting on the fact that he will also hold substantive talks with the representatives of the sides.

A new and positive factor is the trend toward direct Georgian-Abkhaz dialogue, which some time ago was, in principle, impossible. We welcome and support the initiative of the Special Envoy on the organization, with the assistance of Russia, of a Georgian-Abkhaz meeting, and will do everything possible to promote its success.

We have solid grounds for considering that these efforts are having the required effect on the Abkhaz side. In the Abkhaz leadership, there is increasingly a mood favouring of the search for compromise agreements towards a settlement. At the same time, in the light of the gulf between the sides, there will remain a need for this growing positive inclination to be transformed into concrete, forward steps on the part of the Abkhaz side.

Another subject of growing concern to us is the ongoing deadlock in the question of the organized return of refugees. We expect that a firm demand of the Security Council on this issue will ultimately enjoy a positive reception in Sukhumi.

We are extremely concerned by the deterioration of security conditions in the Gali region of Abkhazia, Georgia, as a result of the increased threat from mines. The indiscriminate laying of mines has already caused casualties and is seriously hampering the implementation by the CIS peace-keepers and the United Nations military observers of their mandates. Urgent and effective measures must be taken to eliminate the widespread danger of mines. We reaffirm Russia's readiness to assist the United Nations in achieving that objective and hope that the United Nations Secretariat will respond concretely to our proposals.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): The Indonesian delegation would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his thorough and informative report concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, submitted pursuant to resolution 1036 (1996). Our appreciation is also extended to the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Ambassador Edouard Brunner, and his Deputy and Head of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), Mr. Liviu Bota, as well as to all the personnel of UNOMIG who have carried out their tasks under difficult conditions.

My delegation is dismayed to note from the report that political negotiations between the parties have not progressed; the core issue — namely, the definition of a political status for Abkhazia — remains unresolved, thus bringing the political process to a standstill. The uncompromising stance of the Abkhaz side has indeed rendered negotiations more difficult. To break the current impasse, there is a clear need for both parties to intensify their efforts, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator, to achieve an early and comprehensive political settlement of the conflict. Indonesia would like to reaffirm its full support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy aimed at achieving a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict based upon respect for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Compounding our concern regarding the lack of progress on the political front are the continuing troubles on the ground, including the precarious situation in which internally displaced persons find themselves and the persistent mine threat. The humanitarian situation arising from this conflict remains a source of considerable concern for our delegation. In this regard, my delegation would like to underline the urgent need for all refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes in secure conditions, in accordance with international law and as set out in the Quadripartite Agreement. We would also like to emphasize the indiscriminate sufferings which have been inflicted upon the civilian population, peace-keepers and international community observers by the laying of mines in the Gali region. This situation must be immediately redressed.

It is therefore a source of satisfaction to my delegation to note the important contribution of UNOMIG and the peace-keeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States to the alleviation of these serious situations. UNOMIG continues to carry out its mandate in parts of the security and restricted-weapons zones and

in the Kodori valley in an exemplary manner. However, the Mission is unable to operate effectively in other areas, such as the Gali sector, since they have become unstable. The dangers posed to the Mission and the CIS peace-keeping force, as well as to the population of the area, from the persistent mine threat to which we alluded earlier, as well as the lawlessness, including acts of murder, armed robbery, looting, extortion and intimidation, are unacceptable. Our delegation, therefore, would like to underline that it is essential for UNOMIG and the CIS peace-keeping force personnel, as well as the local population, to be granted safety, security and freedom of movement. The fact that even the Abkhaz militia has little control over this region and that the local population is resorting to unofficial "self-defence groups" only underlines, once again, the need to break the stalemate in the negotiations.

Our delegation has noted that UNOMIG is involved in protracted negotiations for the exchange of hostages and that some of these exchanges have been brought to fruition. Also, we are encouraged that the two sides, with the assistance of UNOMIG and the CIS peace-keeping force, are cooperating to solve common problems, such as the fight against criminality, addressing security issues and humanitarian needs, and establishing confidence-building measures.

My delegation cannot fail to commend the cooperation and coordination between UNOMIG and the CIS peace-keeping force in the implementation of their respective mandates that has enabled them to contribute to stabilization in the zone of conflict. The cooperation between UNOMIG and the CIS peace-keeping force has permitted a number of successes in the rapprochement of the parties to the conflict.

In line with our views expressed today, the Indonesian delegation would like fully to support the draft resolution before us. It is our hope that the parties will soon enter constructive and substantial negotiations to bring about a lasting and comprehensive peace.

Mr. Abdel Aziz (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the situation in Abkhazia, which emphasizes the sincere efforts being made by his Special Envoy, Ambassador Edouard Brunner, and his resident Deputy, Mr. Bota, to find a solution to the political status of Abkhazia within the Republic of Georgia, with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.

Since the Secretary-General's last report, despite the efforts of the Special Envoy, the Russian Federation as facilitator and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to make progress towards a solution to this problem, a political settlement is still not in sight. The Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the OSCE have undertaken positive initiatives, not to mention those of the group of "Friends of Georgia" in May, followed by other *démarches* in June. These have helped to move developments forward by trying to persuade the parties, and in particular the Abkhaz side, that the status quo could not continue. We hope that such initiatives will continue to be launched until a final settlement is achieved.

At the same time, Egypt expresses its deep concern at the continued indiscriminate laying of mines on roads, which has led to changes in the deployment of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) and in the nature of operations in the Gali region. Moreover, it endangers Mission personnel and displaced persons, and hampers the work being carried out there. Despite the fact that the United Nations intends to send a group of demining experts and despite the agreement that has been reached, there remains a need for increased demining efforts. These efforts are of particular importance in the light of the United Nations financial crisis, which will not allow the Organization to assume large technical or financial commitments in demining if the laying of mines continues in the future.

That is why we should like to welcome the constructive cooperation that exists between the United Nations Mission and the forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to cope with this important problem, and the implementation by the United Nations of its tasks in all areas.

Egypt shares the concerns of the Secretary-General, as expressed in paragraph 56 of his report, concerning how serious the parties are in the quest for peace. These apprehensions are reaffirmed in the light of the letter from President Shevardnadze addressed to the President of the Security Council.

We are in agreement with the Secretary-General on the financial crisis of the United Nations, which does not allow him to allocate major resources to situations which are making only weak progress. We cannot obligate the United Nations to continue the presence of its troops in such cases.

Egypt supports the establishment of a United Nations office within the framework of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) because of its important role for the protection of human rights. Furthermore, we support the idea that the expenditures for that office should be covered in the United Nations budget for Georgia. We will vote in favour of the draft resolution before the Council.

Mr. Queta (Guinea Bissau) *(interpretation from French)*: The United Nations is making tireless efforts to find a political solution to the conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia. The Russian Federation, acting in its capacity as facilitator, is also playing a remarkable role with a view to the accomplishment of the complex task of bringing the parties together and arriving at a settlement to the dispute through peaceful means. My delegation also is pleased to note the dedication with which the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and his Deputy, as well as the military and civilian personnel of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), are fulfilling the mission entrusted to them by the Security Council. We believe that the parties, and in particular Abkhazia, should avail themselves of the goodwill of the international community in order to overcome their differences and lay the foundations for a lasting peace.

My delegation profoundly regrets the absence of progress in the peace process between Georgia and Abkhazia. We note that the definition of the political status of Abkhazia constitutes the crux of the problem. My delegation believes that this question must be examined in the framework of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, within its internationally recognized borders.

Furthermore, we are concerned at the fact that the threat of mines continues to affect the Gali sector. The laying of new mines endangers the lives of the population and of international civilian and military personnel. It is urgent that the parties put an end to this practice, which prevents the United Nations Mission from fulfilling its mandate.

My Government reiterates its concern at the slowness of the process of the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons. It considers unacceptable any attempt to place obstacles in the way of the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes. In this context, we condemn ethnically motivated killings and other violations of human rights in the region.

We support the recommendation of the Secretary-General that the mandate of UNOMIG be extended for a further period until 31 January 1997.

My delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution before the Security Council because it is well-balanced and reflects the current situation of the peace process between Georgia and Abkhazia.

Mr. Motswagae (Botswana): My delegation is deeply disturbed by the stalemate in the peace process in Abkhazia, Georgia, which is due primarily to the unwillingness of the Abkhaz side to make concessions on the future status of Abkhazia within the Republic of Georgia. The United Nations and the Russian Federation, as facilitator, have proposed various options for the future status of Abkhazia, but the Abkhaz side has continued to show intransigence by its insistence on a union of two equal States. Botswana supports the draft resolution before us, as it correctly stresses the importance which the international community attaches to preserving the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia.

We are outraged by the continued use of "ethnic cleansing" by the leadership in Abkhazia in its attempt to balkanize the territory of Georgia. A quarter of a million refugees and displaced persons who were forcibly removed from their homes four years ago just because they were of a different ethnic group are still languishing in refugee camps in Abkhazia, because the Abkhaz side puts obstacles in the way of their repatriation by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Furthermore, ethnically motivated acts of murder, armed robbery, looting, extortion and intimidation are the order of the day in the Gali region. It is incredible, to say the least, that people who profess to be national leaders cannot observe the most basic tenets of good governance to guarantee the rights of the multiethnic population in the areas under their control.

I also wish to underline the importance that my delegation attaches to paragraph 10 of the draft resolution. Three UNOMIG bases in the Gali sector have had to suspend their operations because of anti-personnel landmines which litter the roads used by the Mission patrol teams in the sector. We find it inexcusable for UNOMIG to be subjected to this kind of menace by those it is trying to assist in bringing peace to their country. On the question of human rights, it is important for the international community to do all in its power to improve the observance of human rights in Abkhazia. We strongly

believe that it is necessary to establish a human rights office in Sukhumi as a matter of urgency.

Once again, the Council has decided to extend the mandate of UNOMIG. The parties to the conflict in Abkhazia are being given yet another chance, maybe a last chance, to make peace. We urge them not to misuse this opportunity. They should realize that the patience of the international community is not inexhaustible. We urge them to enter into serious dialogue with a view to achieving a political settlement within the mandate period established by the draft resolution. They may never again have the benefit of an environment conducive to peaceful negotiations, since the mandates of UNOMIG and the CIS peace-keeping forces cannot be extended indefinitely.

Mr. Ferrarin (Italy) *(interpretation from French)*: I should like first of all to say that the Italian delegation completely endorses the contents of the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Ireland, Ambassador John Campbell, on behalf of the European Union; we associate ourselves with that statement without reservation.

We thank the Secretary-General for his extremely detailed report on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, and express our appreciation for the tireless efforts made by his Special Envoy, Ambassador Brunner, and for the contribution to the search for a peaceful settlement of the question by the Russian Federation in its capacity as facilitator, and by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The report of the Secretary-General indicates very clearly that in spite of the international community's efforts through the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peace-keeping force, the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, has only worsened over the past few months. The level of violence and intimidation in the Abkhaz region has reached an intolerable point, which prevents the peace-keeping forces from fulfilling their mandate. Italy firmly condemns the use of violence and the ethnically motivated killings and fully shares the view of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which recently declared unacceptable the attempts at demographic modification in the region resulting from the conflict. Likewise, we deplore the obstacles placed by the Abkhaz authorities in the way of the free return of refugees and displaced persons. We urge them to implement existing agreements without further delay.

These violations of international humanitarian law must not go unanswered. We appeal in particular to the Abkhaz side to display moderation, to promote the implementation of the human rights protection programme and to cooperate toward that end with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and with the OSCE.

Furthermore, we express our grave concern at the negative attitude of the Abkhaz leadership on the aspects related to the future political status of the region. We wish to underscore that it is up to it to make the major efforts to eliminate obstacles to a peaceful settlement of the question, in keeping with the principle of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, a principle for which we reaffirm our unreserved support.

In this regard, we wish once again to draw attention to the responsible attitude of the Government of Georgia, which has already made a number of good-will gestures to arrive at a peaceful settlement of the conflict, including the submission of a political proposal which appears to us entirely worthy of consideration.

In conclusion, we cannot fail to support the assessment of the Secretary-General that no measure taken by the United Nations can be effective unless the parties, and in particular the Abkhaz side, display the necessary will to cooperate in the search for a solution. This is why we are convinced that the negotiations must continue. We support the recommendation of the Secretary-General that the UNOMIG mandate be renewed until 31 January 1997. Italy will therefore vote in favour of the draft resolution, whose contents, we believe, reflect the current status of the question and which clearly delineate the responsibilities in the conflict.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I shall now put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/1996/544.

A vote was taken by a show of hands.

In favour:

Botswana, Chile, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Indonesia, Italy, Poland, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President (*interpretation from French*): There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1065 (1996).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. Inderfurth (United States): To our regret, the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, has not improved. The talks are stalled. The Abkhaz are apparently as intransigent as ever. A quarter of a million refugees are still deprived of the comfort of their homes. The threat to the unarmed observers of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) has grown.

Today's resolution addresses these issues. The Security Council has spoken to reaffirm the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. We have called for the Secretary-General, and the Russian Federation as facilitator, to intensify their efforts to achieve a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict. Of course, neither the Secretary-General nor the Russian Federation can achieve this goal without the full cooperation and participation of the parties. The parties bear the true burden of making peace.

The resolution reflects the fact that the parties have not displayed equal amounts of flexibility. The Abkhaz leadership acts as if an independent Abkhazia were a possibility. It is not. President Shevardnadze, on the other hand, has made a public offer of broad autonomy for Abkhazia. In his recent letter to the Security Council President, he reiterated this offer and noted that this broad autonomy could include a parliament and a supreme court, as well as such attributes of statehood as a flag, an emblem and an anthem. We understand that the Abkhaz leader Ardzinba is currently in Moscow and will meet next week with the Secretary-General's Special Envoy. We appeal to him to listen carefully to Ambassador Brunner and to engage in a meaningful and flexible way with the Georgian side.

In the meantime, UNOMIG personnel, as well as others in the Gali region, are facing a grave threat from landmines. This threat is evidence that some elements in the region want only to perpetuate violence and conflict. The resolution adopted today condemns these actions and calls upon the parties to take all measures to prevent mine laying. The United States supports the Secretariat's approach to this threat, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report, and we encourage the implementation of these measures as soon as possible. We also think that the these measures should not be considered exhaustive and that the Secretariat should continue to look at other modes of reacting to the landmine threat.

The resolution refers to the conclusions of the Budapest summit of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). CSCE participating States

> "expressed their deep concern over 'ethnic cleansing', the massive expulsion of people, predominantly Georgian, from their living areas and the deaths of large numbers of innocent civilians". *(S/1994/1435, annex, part II)*

These horrors must not be repeated.

The United States firmly supports the proposal for the programme for the protection and promotion of human rights in Abkhazia, to be carried out by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in cooperation with the OSCE. Today's resolution calls on the Secretary-General to report to the Council by 15 August on possible arrangements for opening the office in Sukhumi. Agreement to this centre from both sides represents a first step in breaking down the barriers of mistrust and hatred that have arisen between them. The United States delegation expects that the Secretary-General and other members of the Council will seriously consider financing the office through voluntary contributions rather than adding the financial and administrative burden of funding the office to UNOMIG's responsibilities. We expect to be able to make a substantial voluntary contribution to the office and ask other Member States to do likewise.

The United States shares the Secretary-General's observation, as expressed in his report of 1 July 1996, that he, as executor of the international community's will,

> "cannot continue to request resources for peacemaking and peace-keeping in situations where there is little prospect of making progress". *(S/1996/507, para. 56)*

As he further noted,

> "it is only the parties that can establish peace, and they must do it through dialogue and mutual accommodation". *(Ibid.)*

The time for that is now. The parties must demonstrate the necessary will to cooperate. If they do not, and if the status quo continues for another six months, they must face the possibility that the international community will take an even closer look at whether UNOMIG belongs in Georgia.

The United States again urges all parties to the conflict in Georgia to cooperate fully with UNOMIG, cease destructive acts such as mine laying, and make a concerted effort towards resolving peacefully their differences. Only in this way can UNOMIG successfully carry out its responsibilities.

Finally, may I express my delegation's great appreciation for the dedicated service of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Mr. Brunner, the Deputy Special Envoy, Mr. Bota, and all the personnel of UNOMIG.

Mr. Martínez Blanco (Honduras)(*interpretation from Spanish*): The Secretary-General's report of 1 July 1996 on the situation in Abkhazia indicates that, in general, there has been no progress in the political negotiations between Georgia and Abkhazia and that the peace process remains at a standstill. The parties have not yet resolved their differences to achieve a prompt solution to the conflict, including the political status of Abkhazia within the State of Georgia, with respect for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In the light of this situation, Honduras believes that it is necessary for the international community to intensify its efforts to promote political dialogue between the parties, so that they may achieve a broad agreement on those aspects necessary to move the peace process forward — that is, the safe return to their homes of refugees and displaced persons, in accordance with international law and as established in the Quadripartite Agreement of 4 April 1994, and an agreement on a special status for Abkhazia, while maintaining the territorial integrity of Georgia.

For this reason, we urge the parties, especially the Abkhaz party, to make progress towards a political solution of the conflict, to cooperate with the steps being taken in this respect by the Secretary-General, with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator, and to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions.

With regard to the humanitarian situation in Abkhazia, we are pleased that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, has begun three projects in the Gali region to promote the reintegration of people who have returned to their places of origin, and that consultations are under way for the implementation of the programme for the protection and promotion of human rights, which has been accepted by the parties, and which will undoubtedly improve the observance of human rights in Abkhazia.

In spite of the insecurity and instability prevailing in the Gali region, and despite the threat posed by mines to the safety and security of the personnel of the Observer Mission and its activities, the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) continues to fulfil its mandate and is cooperating satisfactorily with the peace-keeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States and with UNHCR. As the Secretary-General's report so rightly emphasized, the threat of mines is grave. It is not confined to a single region, and could have serious consequences when the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons resumes. In this respect, we urge the parties to prevent the laying of mines and to cooperate fully with UNOMIG.

My delegation believes that while the peace process is being reactivated through dialogue and mutual concessions by the parties, the presence of the Mission remains necessary. That is why we voted in favour of the resolution extending its mandate. We hope that the parties will show their desire for peace through the adoption of concrete measures leading to a political solution to the Abkhaz conflict.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of France.

By unanimously adopting resolution 1065 (1996) extending the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), the Council intends solemnly to send a political message to the parties, and especially to the Abkhaz party.

Political negotiations must be urgently resumed. The Government of Georgia has made generous offers that would allow Abkhazia to enjoy very broad political autonomy. It is now necessary for the officials in Sukhumi to accept the necessary compromises for the good of the Abkhaz people. In particular, they must renounce any separatist delusions. The future of Abkhazia lies within Georgia, and the international community will not support a settlement which does not fully respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.

The obstacles to the return of refugees and displaced persons must be removed. The conclusion of political negotiations cannot be a prerequisite for this. By signing the Moscow Quadripartite Agreement, the Abkhaz party made a solemn commitment, which it must honour without delay or preconditions. In this respect, the development of the situation in the Gali region will test the seriousness of the Abkhaz representatives. Continued refusal to cooperate on this issue could only lead the international community to condemn in the harshest terms what would be tantamount to a deliberate policy of "ethnic cleansing".

The deterioration of security conditions both for the local population and for international personnel is another subject for concern. The laying of mines in the Gali region constitutes a terrorist act. The parties must take all possible measures to prevent this and to arrest the perpetrators. This is a pivotal issue which puts the credibility of the parties at stake. In the meantime, France will give its full support to the measures taken by the Secretary-General, and to those which he plans to take to ensure the protection of UNOMIG personnel.

France also fully supports measures to assist the parties in making progress in political negotiations. This is the object of the programme of human rights monitoring in Abkhazia, which is an important confidence-building measure, and which must be implemented as quickly as possible. This is also the purpose of the report which the Secretary-General has been requested to make on ways to provide technical and financial assistance for the reconstruction of Abkhazia once a political settlement has been reached.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.